

Top 16 Focus Areas



Geological Heritage Conservation

UNESCO Global Geoparks are areas that use the concept of sustainability, value the heritage of Mother Earth and recognise the need to protect it.

The defining geological sites in UNESCO Global Geoparks are protected by indigenous, local, regional and/or national law and management authorities, which allow for the necessary monitoring and maintenance of these sites.

All UNESCO Global Geoparks use best practices and enhances methods for preserving the geological heritage. The Global Geoparks Network is developing partnerships among UNESCO Global Geoparks for sharing best practice and know-how on the protection, conservation and rational management of the geological heritage sites.



Education for Sustainability

UNESCO Global Geoparks develop and operate educational activities for all ages to spread awareness of our geological heritage and its links to other aspects of our natural, cultural and intangible heritages.

UNESCO Global Geoparks offer educational programmes for schools or special activities for children through "Summer camps", "Kids Clubs" or special "Fossil Fun Activities".

They also offer education, both formal and informal, for adults and retired people.



Biodiversity Protection

UNESCO Global Geoparks are areas where the analysis of specific interactions between the lithosphere and biosphere provides an integrated concept of the role of the geological environment in the evolution of the biosphere. Geopark activities and projects are important in order to raise awareness on the relationship between the geological environment and modern ecosystems and their rational management under a holistic concept.



Capacity Building Activities

UNESCO Global Geoparks offer training courses and capacity building activities for local stakeholders and young unemployed people who can then, in turn, support Geopark activities and operations.

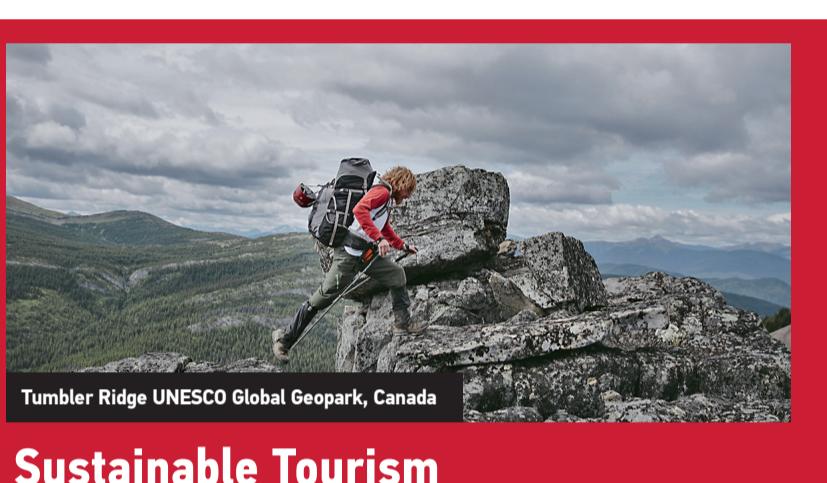
The Global Geoparks Network in collaboration with UNESCO organises International Training Courses on Geoparks supporting the development of Geoparks in many countries especially in Regions with not many UNESCO Global Geoparks.



Climate Change Awareness

UNESCO Global Geoparks hold records of past climate change and are educators on current climate change as well as adopting a best practice approach to utilising renewable energy and employing the best standards of "green tourism".

UNESCO Global Geoparks serve as outdoor museums on the effects of past and current climate change thus giving the opportunity to show visitors how climate change can affect our environment, and raise awareness on the potential impact of climate change on the region, and provide the local communities with the knowledge to mitigate and adapt to the potential effects of climate change.



Sustainable Tourism

UNESCO Global Geoparks create infrastructure and activities to support visitor's access and interpretation of the Geological heritage as well as the development of sustainable tourism activities in the Geopark territory.

UNESCO Global Geoparks promote themselves as sustainable tourism destinations offering a diversity of guided field walks and nature tourism activities, authentic experience and local gastronomy.

The Global Geoparks Network became a gold partner of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2017 to support the celebration of the International Year of sustainable Tourism for development.



Employment

UNESCO Global Geoparks are a platform for the development, nurturing and promotion of local cottage industry and craft products.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are contributing for the sustainable development of areas hosting significant geological heritage sites through the creation of new enterprises and the employment of young people in their territories.



Women Empower

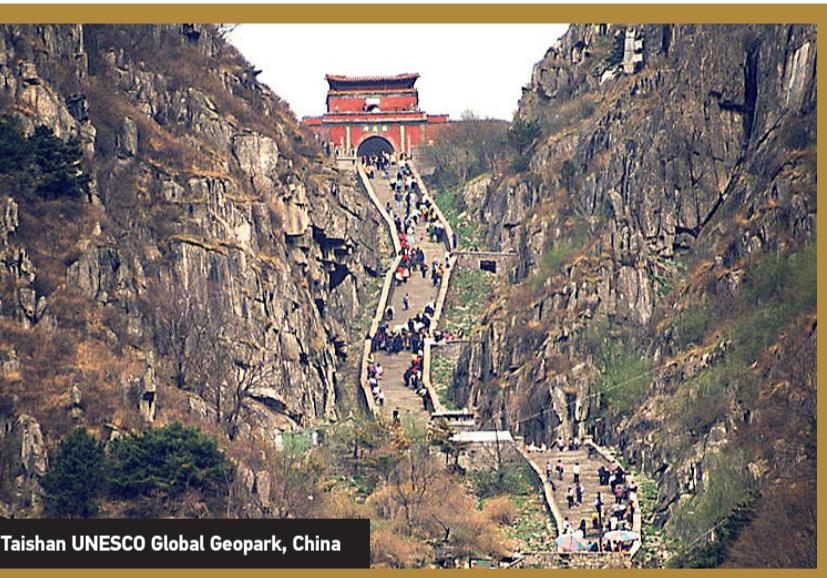
UNESCO Global Geoparks have a strong emphasis on empowering women whether through focused education programmes or through the development of women's cooperatives. In some UNESCO Global Geoparks women's cooperatives also provide an opportunity for women to obtain additional income in their own area and on their own terms.



Natural Resources Wise Use

The history of mankind and civilisation is based on the resources exploited from Earth's crust. The development of modern societies is limited by the consequences of depleting of natural resources.

UNESCO Global Geoparks inform people about the sustainable use and need for natural resources, while at the same time promoting respect for the environment and the integrity of the landscape.



Cultural Heritage Enhancement

In many countries emblematic geosites are considered as sacred places. Since ancient times, sacred sites have had a mysterious allure for billions of people around the world. Legends and contemporary reports tell of extraordinary experiences people have had while visiting these places. Different sacred sites have the power to heal the body, enlighten the mind and inspire the heart. People built in such places temples and monasteries. UNESCO Global Geoparks host some important sacred places emphasising the connection between specific landscapes and land-forms with mythology, archaeology and history.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are fundamentally about people and about exploring and celebrating the links between our communities and the Earth. The Earth has shaped who we are: it has shaped our farming practices, the building materials and methods we have used for our homes, even our mythology, folklore and folk traditions.



Sustainable Development

UNESCO Global Geoparks are engaging with local people and respecting their traditional way of life in a way that empowers them and respects their human rights and dignity.

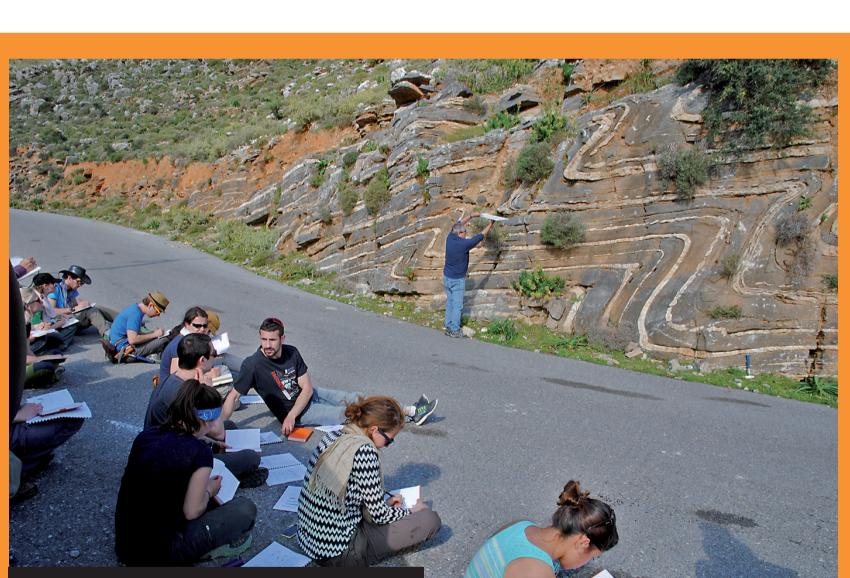
A UNESCO Global Geopark should have an active role in the economic development of its territory through enhancement of a general image linked to the geological heritage and the development of sustainable tourism. A Geopark has direct impact on the territory by influencing its inhabitants' living conditions and environment. The objective is to enable the inhabitants to re-appropriate the values of the territory's heritage and actively participate in the territory's cultural revitalisation as a whole.



Networking

Networking is one of the core principles of Geoparks. Networking strongly contributes to the success of the Geoparks movement and plays a valuable role in facilitating the sharing of experience, quality management, formation of joint initiatives and projects and capacity-building.

The Global Geopark Network and its Regional Geopark Networks offer a global platform of cooperation and exchange of best practice between UNESCO Global Geoparks.



Geological Hazards Risk Reduction

UNESCO Global Geoparks promote awareness of geological hazards, including volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis. Through educational activities for the local people and visitors many UNESCO Global Geoparks give information on the source of geological hazards and ways to reduce their impact including disaster response strategies.

These efforts build important capacity and contribute to building more resilient communities that have the knowledge and skills to effectively respond to potential geological hazards. The Global Geoparks Network working group on Geo-hazards coordinates common activities and helps prepare disaster mitigation strategies among Geoparks.



Local and Indigenous Knowledge

UNESCO Global Geoparks actively involve local and indigenous peoples, preserving and celebrating their culture. By involving local and indigenous communities, UNESCO Global Geoparks recognise the importance of these communities, their culture and the link between these communities and their land. It is one of the criteria of UNESCO Global Geoparks that local and indigenous knowledge, practice and management systems, alongside science, are included in the planning and management of the area.



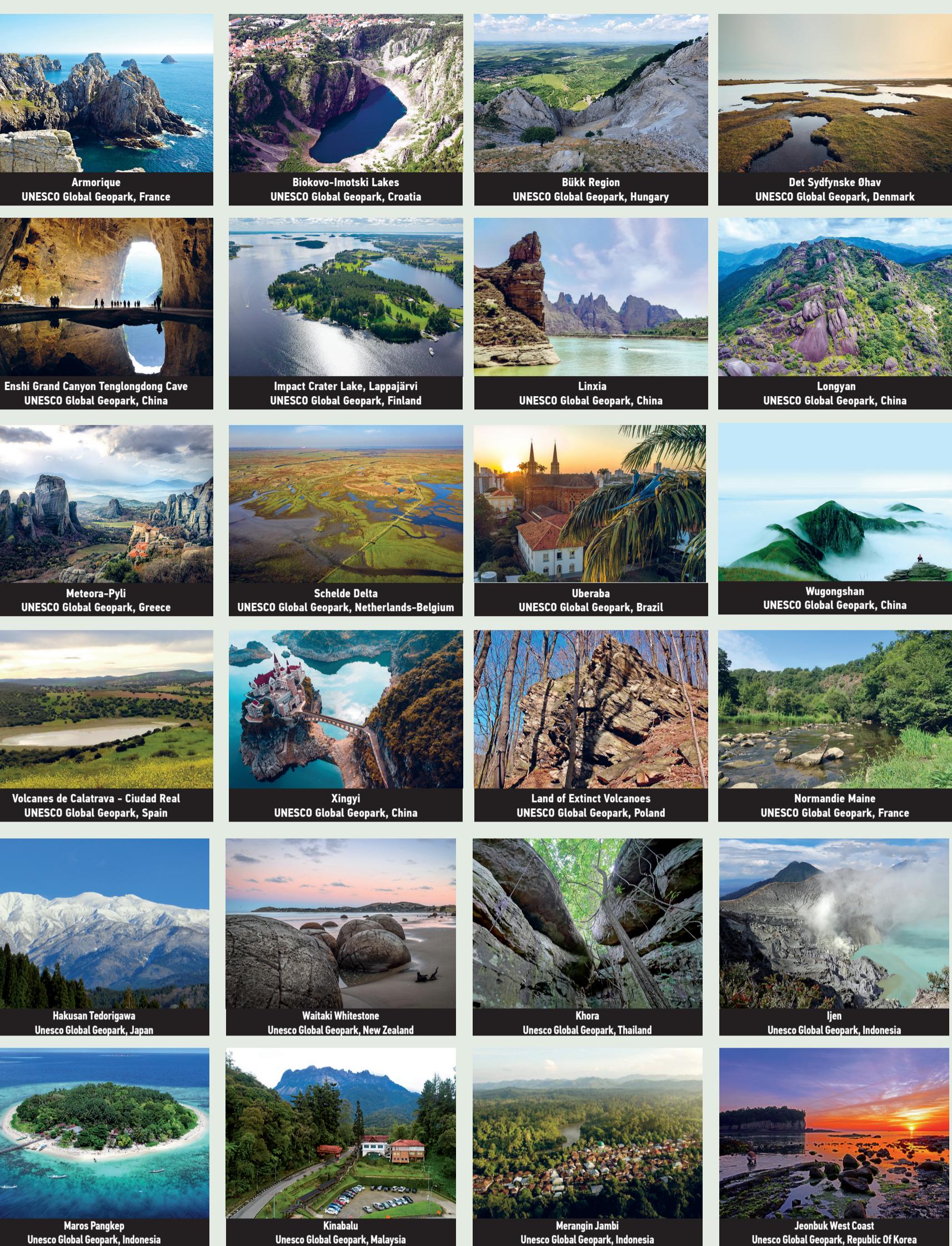
Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to ensure the continuing high quality of UNESCO Global Geoparks, including the quality of the management of each UNESCO Global Geopark, the status of each UNESCO Global Geopark is subject to a thorough re-validation every 4 years.

The Global Geoparks Network is supporting the Geopark evaluation and re-validation process by providing the experts for the evaluation missions and maintaining the roster of evaluators.

Global Geoparks Network

2004-2025 21 years of collaboration for geo-conservation and sustainable development



UNESCO Global Geoparks

2025 / 2026



Global Geoparks Network

2004-2025 21 years of collaboration for geo-conservation and sustainable development



What is a UNESCO Global Geopark?

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

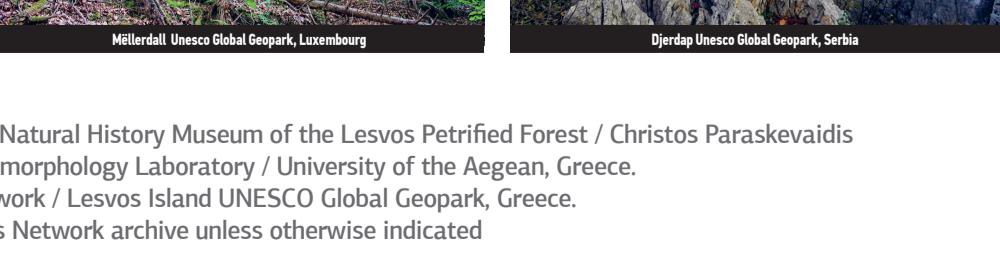
A UNESCO Global Geopark uses its geological heritage in connection with all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage, to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our earth's resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural disasters-related risks.

By raising awareness of the importance of the area's geological heritage in history and society today, UNESCO Global Geoparks give local people a sense of pride in their region and strengthen their identification with the area.

The creation of innovative local enterprises, new jobs and high quality training courses is stimulated as new sources of revenue are generated through geotourism, while the geological resources of the area are protected.

At present, there are 213 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 48 countries.

All the UNESCO Global Geoparks are institutional members of the Global Geoparks Network.



Ojedop UNESCO Global Geopark, Serbia

UNESCO Global Geoparks

UNESCO's work with Geoparks began in 2001, when a collaboration agreement was signed between UNESCO Division of Earth Sciences and the European Geoparks Network.

In 2004, 17 European and 8 Chinese geoparks came together at UNESCO headquarters in Paris to form the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) where national geological heritage initiatives contribute to and benefit from their membership of a global network of exchange and cooperation.

On 17 November 2015, the 195 Member States of UNESCO ratified the creation of a new label, the UNESCO Global Geoparks, during the 38th General Conference of the Organisation. This expresses governmental recognition of the importance of managing outstanding geological sites and landscapes in a holistic manner.

UNESCO supports efforts in all countries to establish UNESCO Global Geoparks all around the world, in close collaboration with the Global Geoparks Network.

Poster produced by the Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest / Christos Paraskevaidis
Map by the Applied Geomorphology Laboratory / University of the Aegean, Greece.
© Global Geoparks Network / Lesvos Island UNESCO Global Geopark, Greece.
Photos: Global Geoparks Network archive unless otherwise indicated



NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM
OF THE LESVOS
PETRIFIED FOREST

